

NEW JERSEY

1999-2000

Guidelines and
Application

ORIGINAL

BEST PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 22, 1999

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Category | Special Education | (Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.) |
| Practice Name | Multiage Inclusion | |
| Number of Schools with Practice | 1 (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.) | |
| County | Gloucester | |
| District (Proper Name) | Washington Township Public Schools School District | |
| District Address | 206 E. Holly Ave. street/p. o. box Sewell, New Jersey 08080 city 856 Fax 856- zip code | |
| District Telephone | 589-6644 Fax 256-8931 E-mail: RKern@wtps.org | |
| Chief School Administrator | Dr. Robert W. Kern | |
| Nominated School #1 (Proper Name) | | |
| School Address | Thomas Jefferson Elementary School street/p. o. box 95 Altair Drive city Turnersville, NJ 08012 zip code | |
| School Telephone | 856-589-8248 Fax 589-6919 E-mail: wpowel@wtps.org | |
| School Principal | Winifred M. Powell | |
| Program Developer(s) | Leona Aronovitch and Patrick Rumaker, Elayne Clancy | |
| Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature | | |

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No

County Superintendent's Signature

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BEST PRACTICES 1999-2000 APPLICATION

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Application Requirements:

- ☐ **RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS**. No reference should be made to the names of the district or the school(s). Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements.
- ☐ **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable) and 4 and **THE NUMBER OF LINES SPECIFIED FOR RESPONSES** to the statements. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- ☐ Application must be **keybaorded on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Ten-point or larger computer font or twelve-pitch or larger typewriter font** must be used. (This sentence is in ten-point.)
- ☐ **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to the statements below must be **no more than a total of three pages**. **Keyboard the statement followed by the response.** Format your response to the number of lines specified.
- ☐ **The information on page 4 and the keyboarded responses** to statements must be printed or copied on **one side of the page**. **The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable)** must be printed or copied on **one side of the page**. Staple pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) and 4 and the keyboarded responses together.
- ☐ **The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.**
- ☐ **The original and seven copies of the application** must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 22, 1999**, with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.
- ☐ **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION MAY RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE APPLICATION..**

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application: | | |
| Type of School | Grade Levels | Practice Name <u>Multiage Inclusion</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School | Gr. <u>1 - 5</u> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School | | Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School | | Number of Districts with Practice <u>1</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits. | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts) <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs (services contributing to high student achievement.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education <input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community and/or higher education.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment <input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Education <input type="checkbox"/> World Languages |

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content* including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. **(Maximum of 60 lines for response)**

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>

Describe the practice and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, promotes student achievement, and can be replicated.

Two Multiage Inclusion Classes have been designed and implemented at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School. A grade 2/3 class was successfully piloted during the 1996-97 school year and is continuing in that fashion for this school year. A grade 4/5 class was piloted during the 1997-98 school year.

The idea of the Multiage Class is to provide an inclusive setting where regular and special education children in grades 2/3 and 4/5 can work together with regular and special education teachers as a "community of learners". The program used Jim Grant's "Multiage Bill of Rights" where children work at their own rate in a continuous progress program. Children work in whole group, small group, and individual settings on lessons that are based on thematic units using second/third and fourth/fifth grade curricula and student interest. Lessons are designed around learning styles and multiple intelligences of children. Lessons also focus on concepts and process rather than isolated facts.

The classes consist of 32 and 31 children respectively, one regular education teacher, one special education teacher, and the grade 4/5 class has two assistants. It is important to note that our other Multiage Class does not have assistants due to budget restraints. Also, although the class size is large, the teacher-student ratio is low. The rooms are larger than the average classroom in the building and can accommodate the class sizes. The students are evenly distributed by grade, ability, male-female ratio, and socio-economic background. The special education students have varied, and in some cases, multiple disabling conditions including a child who has Downs Syndrome.

The objectives for this program are related to the goal to implement existing curriculum and to create a community where there is a natural inclusion of all children. The objectives are:

- To allow students a continuous progression of learning
- To teach children an appreciation of each other's uniqueness
- To teach children to recognize and appreciate each person's talents
- To have subject areas integrated into thematic units where applicable
- To build on students' interests and sense of wonder
- To offer a multitude of resources and choices for students
- To offer parents to be directly involved in their child's class activities
- To include self pacing programs for continuous and individual progress in reading, language arts, and math
- To emphasize higher order thinking skills
- To provide enrichment and opportunities for acceleration of learning for all students
- To expand the basic curriculum areas to include and emphasize technology

The Multiage Class is truly innovative because all of the children are models and can learn from each other with such a variety of students in the room. The older children help the younger ones, the children with more background experiences provide information for those with fewer experiences, and the unique differences really become talents to be celebrated. By utilizing a thematic, problem-centered approach to teaching and by providing children with the same teachers for two years, there is no time lost for learning new management systems and teachers' approaches at the beginning of the year. Children are exposed to a wider variety of activities and have two years to become proficient with a process or skill. High student achievement is fostered because the children are more challenged and have two teachers to provide a creative and supportive atmosphere.

The program can be easily replicated since In Class Support teachers already spend large portions of the day in regular education classrooms. IDEA Grant money was used to purchase additional literature/trade books and management materials. Teachers provided the creative difference not tax dollars.

Describe the educational needs of the students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum content addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standards.

Since the Multiage Grade 2/3 and 4/5 Classes are a heterogeneous environment, the children represent relatively even numbers of boys, girls, grade levels, academic and social abilities. Regular education children are chosen from lists according to the categories just mentioned, with in-put from the previous year's teacher and from parents. The Multiage Class teachers do a presentation for the first grade parents in the spring to inform them about the program. Because of class size, there are only about 16 second grade slots available (second graders stay in the class the next year as third graders) for the next school year. Many more parents and teachers have children to recommend than there are slots available, so the selection is completed as a lottery from the lists as mentioned above. The grade 2/3 children then move on to the grade 4/5 class.

Special Education children are selected through the Annual Review process. The class is highly recommended for children whose IEP's provide an in-class support delivery of services. However, because the program supports acceptance and understanding of all students' strengths and weaknesses in a "community of learners", the program is also very successful with some very disabled learners like Downs Syndrome children. The Child Study Team, parents, and teachers discuss each child's needs at the Annual Review and decide if the Multiage Class meets these needs.

The district curricular areas address the Core Content Standards in the Multiage Class and in all grade levels in our district because the district has moved toward the use of real literature, process writing, a constructivist approach to learning, and more meaningful processing in general. The curricular areas are not textbook driven. Textbooks are used with a variety of materials and technology to support learning. The Multiage Class uses more of a theme approach. The themes center around the science and social studies curricula in grades 2/3 and 4/5. A two-year Multiage Curriculum guide for each class has been established along with a skill continuum in order to demonstrate how the themes meet the district curricular standards. The curriculum is delivered through process approaches and teaching strategies that address a variety of learning styles and intelligences.

The theme of Water Habitats (grade 3 Science Curriculum) can provide an example of how Content Standards in language arts/literacy, science, math, and social studies are addressed. Four trade books are read where characters, plots, and/or themes center around living things whose habitats are in or near water. Children will work in cooperative groups, individually, or in whole groups to read, discuss, write, listen, explain, predict, summarize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas based on the books. For instance, they will read and speak in front of a group or class, will create written work based on problems that characters encountered, will create new and different habitats, will use a variety of materials and texts to research more about living things and habitats, will use chart or graph information for debate and discussion, will solve a variety of problems using scientific, mathematical, visual, aural, and tactile sources, and will understand the diversity of living things and environments.

A sampling of some of the Core Content Standards addressed in just this one unit would be 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.11, 4.14, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.2, 6.7, 6.9. Children are not memorizing facts or only learning at the comprehension level. By processing ideas and concepts in a meaningful, interesting way with other children who have a variety of backgrounds, personalities, strengths, and styles, all children are encouraged to take risks and learn in a more challenging way.

Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

The district required a program evaluation as part of the Action Plan to implement this program and evaluation is ongoing. The program is designed to create positive student attitudes toward school and peers through a community environment in a classroom. An attitudinal survey was administered to the children in the fall of 1996 & 1997 to determine their feelings toward school, their own self-esteem concepts, and their relationships with other children.

A mid-year parent meeting was held in February to determine their opinions about their children's academic and social progress. Because active parent involvement is part of the Multiage Program, most parents had already been in the classroom to facilitate literature groups, help with class activities, or assist with class trips. Therefore, the parents expressed very positive opinions about the Multiage Class. They wanted to go to the Board of Education Meetings and write to the Superintendent of Schools right away to praise the program to ensure that the program would be approved for the following year (The board approval date was scheduled for May!).

The teachers maintained portfolios for the children, kept a record of performance assessments, and used their own teacher-made theme unit tests, teacher-made reading tests, the regular district math unit tests, and a combination of teacher-made and district spelling tests. IOWA Tests were also administered in the spring of 1997 and 1998.

Another part of the program evaluation involved the results of a teacher's Masters Thesis where she compared academic achievement, student, and parent attitudes among 3rd grade children in a regular education class (which contained a population of in-class support children) with the Multiage Grade 2/3 Inclusion Class. The 3rd grade regular education teacher worked with a special education teacher who was in her class for parts of the school day. The results of her study indicated that the students in the Multiage Class scored significantly higher on district math tests and more children were reading at an independent level than in the graded classroom. There was no significant difference between parents of the Multiage Class or graded class children with regard to over-all attitude about their children's education. Both groups of parents thought that their children were receiving an excellent education. There was also no significant difference between the attitudes of the two groups of children. Both groups had positive attitudes about school in the thesis survey.

It is interesting to note that the Master's Thesis study did indicate that children in the Multiage Class were the best behaved children on the playground at lunch according to lunch aides because they used appropriate conflict resolution skills and the children demonstrated mutual respect and concern for each other.

The IOWA scores also indicated a significant growth in reading, math, and language arts for most second, third and fifth grade children in the Multiage Class. The fourth grade children took the ESPA and the first year of recorded results indicated that the children were proficient in all areas tested.

The Downs Syndrome child grew well beyond the goals of his IEP. His parents wanted to focus on social/emotional growth and did not want academic growth emphasized on the IEP since he had the developmental level of a pre-school child. Not only was his language growth (receptive and expressive) much higher than expected, but he also reached a reading readiness stage that was not expected. This year he is receiving reading instruction through the Project Assist Program.

A post-attitudinal survey was administered to the children in the spring of 1997 and 1998. The survey showed an increase in positive attitudes toward learning. Also, the survey indicated a social confidence on the part of the children.